

Flowering forest vital for Julimar bird

Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance

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JULIMAR Conservation Park is an important natural habitat for more than 100 species of native birds which live there permanently, visit when trees are in full flower or pause while passing through.

Our subject today is a bird that comes to Julimar when the trees are in blossom and in good seasons, also breeds there.

I am talking about Western Australia's smallest parrot, the Purple-crowned Lorikeet which weighs only 57g and measures about 15-16cm in length.

This is a spectacularly coloured bird with a bright green back, pale blue chest and bright red underwing.

It gets its name from the purple crown on its head.

The bird is a highly nomadic South-West species that travels in flocks of hundreds to gather in areas where trees are flowering.

In Julimar, it favours Jarrah, Marri and Wandoo and, if conditions in spring are good, will look for a suitable tree hollow in which to nest.

The indigenous name for this species is Cowara, Cower, or Kowar, according to *Birds of Western Australia* by Dominic Louis

Serventy and Hubert Massey Whittell.

It is a bird of the tree-tops and can be very difficult to see.

The first indication of its presence may be the sound of its 'zit zit' call while flying or chattering when feeding.

Early ornithologists spent a considerable amount of time studying the bird's feeding habits to decide if it was solely a nectar feeder or whether it also consumed pollen.

The consensus now is that it consumes both by taking the blossom in its mouth and running its tongue through the stamens.

When breeding – like all parrots – it nests in hollows and lays two to four white eggs on the floor of the hollow.

An interesting observation of this species is that only the female incubates eggs and when leaving the nest to feed, the male escorts it to and from the feeding area.

The male helps to feed the young which hatch after about 18 days, according to Serventy and Whittell.

Because the species requires flowering trees to survive, it is extremely important that old-growth forests such as in Julimar Conservation Park are preserved for future generations of this remarkable bird.

Our group will host an excursion into the Julimar Forest on Saturday August 20.

If you would like to join us, please contact Max Howard at avon.hill@bigpond.com.